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Book Reviews

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Review of *Global Entertainment Media: A Critical Introduction* by Lee Artz (Blackwell)

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ABSTRACT Artz gives overwhelming evidence of how the cultural hegemony of individualism and consumerism is promoted everywhere by transnational media corporations (TNMCs), so that current social relations in capitalism are reproduced and reinforced. The reader can get a clear outlook of TNMCs and their impact on the diversity, hybridization, and standardization of global culture and outlooks.

Global Entertainment Media: A Critical Introduction by Lee Artz. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2015, 280 pp. (paperback) ISBN 978-1-118-95543-7. US List: \$51.95.

The book presents the complex relations between economic power and entertainment media in a world where some transnational corporations (TNCs) have reached global dimensions. Besides the obvious drive for increased profitability of transnational media corporations (TNMCs) (\$2.2 trillion US dollars in 2012 as estimated global media revenue), Artz gives overwhelming evidence of how the cultural hegemony of individualism and consumer ideology (consumerism) is promoted everywhere by TNMCs, so that current social relations in capitalism are reproduced and reinforced.

Concepts thorough the book are presented in a very didactical way. It incorporates vast bibliographical references and brief sections dedicated to various topics such as transnational alliances, neoliberalism, and hegemony. The book's first half focuses on transnational relations in twenty-first century capitalism and transnational media, while the second half, the last four chapters, are dedicated to topics such as cultural hegemony and diversity. Artz emphasizes the increased linkage of national capital into transnational operations: subcontracting, outsourcing, licensing, and co-productions, along with increased joint ventures, mergers, acquisitions, and foreign direct investments.

Artz also describes some transitions of firms and conglomerates from regional to global environments to media leaders. In particular, Rupert Murdoch's News Corp includes vast media enterprises (for instance, Fox News in the US, two thirds of printed media in Australia) in four continents and brings in \$700 million in profits annually. Artz also provides lists and summaries of top transnational entertainment media. For instance, Artz provides a list of the eight largest TNMCs, their subsidiaries, joint ventures, and **director interlocks (members of a corporate board of directors serving on the boards of multiple corporations)** primarily related to broadcasting and film. In addition to transnational joint ventures with local firms, many of these TNMCs brand their co-production as their own. For example, Bertelsmann, the largest transnational operator in Europe, has its RTL TV brand in ten European countries.

In the global economy, nations are linked to each other through the transnationalization of the production process, of finance, and of the circuits of capital accumulation, and no single nation-state can remain totally insulated from the global economy or the cultural superstructure of global capitalism. Therefore, to many people in the world, entertainment appears natural because of its ubiquity and pervasive presence.

In light of recent neoliberal economic transformations, including various forms of privatization, the increasing size and power of TNMCs has devastated part of the public sphere by dismantling public media and curbing media production alternative voices and social groups. We live in a world where Pokémon, ESPN, Jackie Chan, You Tube, and Disney are popular. Originally produced in Columbia, the telenovela *Yo Soy Betty, La Fea*, has been translated into thirteen languages and broadcast in seventy-four countries (including the Americanized version, *Ugly Betty*), but few know that Colombian media success is partly driven by the non-union labor of people working under repressive anti-labor laws.

When dealing with key concepts such as democracy and political power, the author takes care to emphasize throughout the entire book the fuzzy distinction in the content spread by most mass media corporations between what is entertainment and what is entertainment news and ideology, since media produce and sell products that explicitly transmit and elicit different symbolic meanings, values, norms, and beliefs. The hegemonic leadership of the capitalist class depends on widespread consent to these social relations by other social classes and groups. In particular, cultural hegemony, understood as a social process of moral, philosophical, and political leadership with the active consent of other important social groups, is analyzed in some detail in the second half of the book. Global media domination is related to cultural resistance and social negotiation.

The influence of economic and social peculiarities (such as language and cultural barriers) on cultural adaptations and hybridizations are briefly analyzed in the eighth chapter, immediately before the overall conclusion. Since generally smaller transnational media cannot challenge top TNMCs, they could merge, could be absorbed, or must offer joint ventures and myriads of smaller transnational productions. In Asia and Africa, where the political economy of media arises from the legacy of colonialism or protectionist policies, the TNMCs exhibit diverse types of evolutions. However, Nollywood (the film industry of Nigeria) works similarly to Hollywood and Bollywood (the film industry of India) but with smaller budgets and levels of income.

The book offers evidence of how the TNMCs compete among themselves, but they help to maintain the status quo in many ways. For instance, Artz show how consumerism obscures the existence of social classes in stories, and promotes, in-turn, hyper-individualism (like superheroes to the rescue) which is widespread in TNMC products, whereas more realistic stories involving organized or collective citizen actions are rare. He claims that the standardization of diverse local expressions of individualism, consumerism, and spectacular entertainment encourages the acceptance of institutional authority and market values. So, the crucial conclusion is that current social relations in capitalism are reproduced and reinforced by TNMCs.

As transnational capital intrudes further into our daily existence, Artz calls, in the final chapter, for alternative social and cultural means in the collective struggle of humanity to find and make more democratic social relations. Working-class political activity is advised in conjunction with cultural activities. Artz claims that we urgently need to avoid manipulation of human desires and to democratize the media to meet community needs: to educate, entertain, and inform, sharing the diversity of human experiences with humor, drama, and meaning. Drawing on examples of public and community media in Latin

America, he mentions La Nueva Televisora del Sur or TeleSUR, a multi-state funded, pan-Latin American terrestrial and satellite television network sponsored by the governments of Venezuela, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Uruguay, and Bolivia. TeleSUR transmits voices from working class and indigenous communities across the world, and particularly from Latin America. TeleSUR transmits voices from working class and indigenous communities, particularly from Latin America to across the world. Media content by TNMCs communicates specific constructed meanings; community-run working-class media communicate their own constructions for understanding the world, where workers and citizens can dissent from any official and majority voices.

In summary, although the book is 280 pages and some data on TNMCs should be expanded, it is an ambitious and provocative work that provides very well researched studies on global entertainment and culture. It is packed with empirical information on firms and their networks, and includes a vast bibliography useful for students, researchers, and the general public. Within a solid framework of transnational social and economic relations in current capitalism, the reader can get a clear perspective of TNMCs and their impact on the diversity, hybridization, and standardization of global culture and outlooks.

 [Bio](#)



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Dr. Marcelo del Castillo-Mussot (Ph.D., University of California, San Diego, 1984) is a full professor of physics at National University of México, México (UNAM), México. He has published more than 90 research articles in physics, interdisciplinary topics, complex systems and sociology.

